

# LOVE WILL NOT WHITEWASH ERROR

An editorial by Reuel Lemmons in Firm Foundation, Sept 24, 1963

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Elsewhere in this issue appears the last of Brother Carl Ketcherside's replies to our editorials concerning his errors in teaching which appeared in the June issues of the Firm Foundation. Read his article, then this reply.

The brother misstates the case completely when he says that our editorials were directed "against my appeal for unity among believers in Christ." The editorials were directed against the *false doctrine* involved in the appeal—the poison hidden in it. We have nothing but praise for any attempt to unite the brethren that is in harmony with the scriptures. It is when the plea would in-

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clude those who have never really become the children of our Father that we must object. It is when the terms of pardon laid down in the Scriptures are repudiated as being no part of the gospel, nor of doctrine either, that we are forced by conscience to object.

We objected to the proposed unity plan on the basis that it was simply the "Ecumenical Movement of the World Council of Churches boiled down and applied to the church." K says we are wrong; that the Ecumenical movement preserves denominational structures while his plea is for destruction of such among us. Yet, he constantly urges "concerned ones" to stay in the factions in which they find themselves and to work for unity. If this does not give endorsement to at least the acceptability to God of "denominational structures" then how could such endorsement be expressed. We repeat that in this plea Brother K has nothing in common with the Campbells and with the Restoration movement, for they plead with people to come out of denominational factions and to unite in an undenominational church. While Campbell pleaded with people to come out, K pleads with them to stay in. This is not the Restoration concept.

Brethren ought to examine closely this idea that "differences do not destroy fellowship. They only place strains upon fellowship. It is a lack of love that destroys fellowship." This doctrine simply means that if you love a person enough you can overlook any sinful thing he may do. The Bible does not teach it that way. Is it a lack of love that caused God to hold sin against man in the first place, and to break fellowship with him? Is it a lack of love that causes God to reject the unbeliever? The impenitent? Is it a lack of love that causes God to curse the perverter of the gospel? (Gal. 1:6-9), or the child of God who adds to or subtracts from the word? (Rev. 22:18-19). Is it a lack of love that causes God to exclude from the kingdom his children who do the works of the flesh? K closes this paragraph by saying we should love the brethren more than we love our differences. We raise the question: should we love our brethren more than we love the truth of God? Did Paul love his own opinion more than he

loved Peter at Antioch? Paul would have sacrificed his love and respect for Peter before he would have given an inch. He loved the truth more than he loved his brother. So should we.

In this connection, K is on record as saying, "Sectarianism . . . is the party spirit and is condemned just as adultery," et al. "You might as well ask if one can be saved if he continues in adultery as to ask if he can be saved while he continues in sectism. If one of God's children sees he is in a party which separates, segregates and aggravates the remainder of God's children purely out of partisanship, he ought to get out of it and do so at once. Otherwise he will be lost because of his factious practice" (MM June 1957). He argues the same at length in MM June '62. Can you love your brother so much that you will overlook murder and adultery? He says, No. But since parties, factions and divisions are just as bad as adultery, etc., how can you say that these things are merely "strains upon the relationship," but that lack of love is the real cause of division. His "out" is that heresy, sectism, etc., is a "personal attitude toward truth," but in the above quotation he says that one must separate himself from a party which fosters sectism, which all denominations do, and yet he tells the "concerned ones" to stay in them and to work from the inside for unity.

K has much to say about accepting people in spite of their error, since God accepts us in spite of a lot of error. Is unbelief the only error which causes God to reject people? What about the "sincere believer" who is sprinkled? K thinks this one is "a child of God, and my brother in prospect," but he is not in "the fellowship" because he is not immersed. Will God take this one into heaven because of his sincerity and in spite of his error? Brethren, there is poison hidden here.

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While he has a lot of truth in the play upon being "right about Jesus and wrong about many other things and still be saved," and the fact that God has "not conditioned life upon knowledge of all truths," YET he tucks in the poison in the implication that God has therefore conditioned life on possession of no essential truth. The Bible does not teach it. God has conditioned the continuance of life upon being scriptural in doctrine and practice. John says that all who have the Son have life (1 John 5:12). We have the Son unless we be reprobate (2 Cor. 13:5). To be reprobate means to fail to stand the test. Paul buffeted his body to keep from being reprobate (1 Cor. 9:27). This proves that indulging the body by satisfying its unlawful desires will cause one to be reprobate. This is why those guilty of the works of the flesh are reprobate and will not enter the kingdom. This is why the Laodiceans were lost; they had not the Son, for he was standing outside knocking (Rev. 3:20). Unscriptural doctrines will cause one to be reprobate also (1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 2 Peter 3:16-17). K has the idea that once a person becomes a son of God no error can separate him from God, especially if he is sincere. Peter says the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest the scriptures to their own destruction. He does not mention any insincerity; they were simply ignorant and unsteadfast. Here is positive proof that error in handling doctrine causes God to reject people. If God rejects them, so should we.

K places instrumental music squarely in the realm of opinion, and chides us for placing it in the realm of faith. He says that if we are going to say instrumental music is wrong we ought to allow the antis the right to say Bible classes are wrong. To be consistent, he then should say that since Paul said circumcision was wrong (Gal. 5:24) he should have allowed the others to say he was wrong about his right to eat meat (1. Tim. 4:3-5). Paul could not condemn circumcision without allowing others to condemn his right to eat meat, and according to K's reasoning the thing Paul should have done was to say that both circumcision and eating of meat were in the realm of opinion; let each do as he thinks best and love everyone so much that there will be no friction. K continues to forget that there is a body of information called TRUTH by which we walk if we would not be rejected by the Lord. If brethren go beyond the truth to use instrumental music in worship, that does not obligate me to refrain from teaching the Bible in classes because some brethren, however sincere, *think* I have gone beyond the truth.

With everything anyone has ever said about the need for unity in the brotherhood we heartily agree. We must repeat that in all that Brother K proposes there is *absolutely nothing new*, except the points upon which we have been forced to take issue. He has said nothing that has not been said before concerning unity. It is at that point where he is willing to go beyond what the scriptures teach to include in "the fellowship" those whom the scriptures expressly exclude that we must differ with him. When it becomes necessary, in order to uphold a new doctrine, to rob both the "gospel" and "doctrine" of the act of baptism, one has gone too far.

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